

GUSTAV MAHLER'S *KINDERTOTENLIEDER*: SUBJECT AND TEXTUAL  
CHOICES AND ALTERATIONS OF THE FRIEDRICH RÜCKERT  
POEMS, A LECTURE RECITAL, TOGETHER WITH  
THREE RECITALS OF SELECTED WORKS OF  
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AND F. MENDELSSOHN  
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Dissertation Prepared for the Degree of  
DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

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The bulk of scholarly research and discussion of Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder* deals with musical concerns and analyses. This study explores the significance of Mahler's selection and use of the poetry of Friedrich Rückert and, in particular, the personal significance of the textual treatment to Mahler. A comparison of the original Rückert text with Mahler's and his textual alterations, as well as a literal translation of the text, is included. The results revealed through the process stated above provides the vocal performer of Gustav Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder* with a study and performance guide for the artist intent on a more complete textual understanding and delivery.

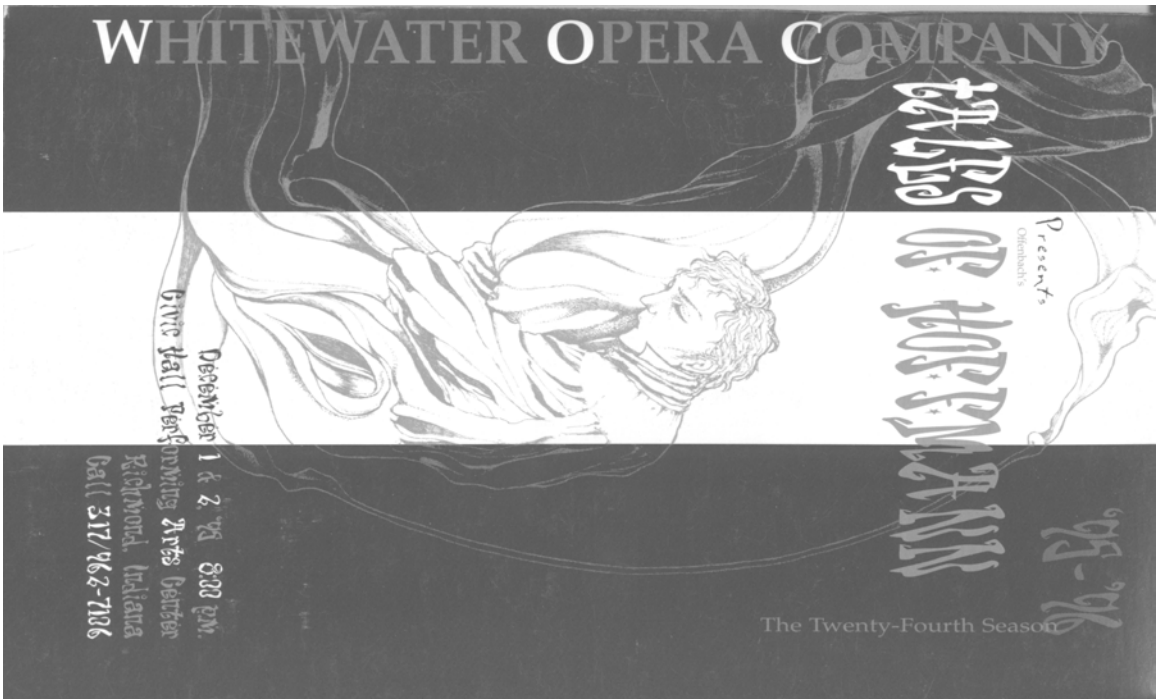
Tape recordings of all performances submitted as dissertation requirements are on deposit in the University of North Texas Library.

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## RECITAL I



### TALES OF HOFFMANN

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR/CONDUCTOR ..... CHARLES COMBOPIANO  
STAGE DIRECTOR ..... NELSON D. SHEELEY  
ORCHESTRA MANAGER ..... WILLIAM TORTOLANO  
SET DESIGNER ..... BARBARA LAPIERRE  
COSTUME COORDINATOR ..... MARILYN JOHNSON  
CHORUS MASTER/REHEARSAL PIANIST ..... CHRISTINA HAAN  
SUBSTITUTE REHEARSAL PIANIST ..... KIKUKO OYA  
LIGHTING DESIGNER ..... DONZEL W. BURKHART  
PRODUCTION/STAGE MANAGER ..... BARBARA LAPIERRE  
TECHNICAL DIRECTOR ..... BILL NIXDORF

### CAST OF CHARACTERS

HOFFMANN ..... RANDAL RUSHING  
HERIONES (OLYMPIA, GILLETTA, ANTONIA, STELLA) ..... LORA FABIO  
VILLAINS (LINDORF, COPPELIUS, DAPPERUTTO, DR. MIRACLE) ..... GEORGE CORDES  
NICKLAUSSE, THE MUSE ..... JANICE CONRADS  
ANTONIA'S MOTHER ..... JANN DEGNAN  
SPALANZANI, NATHANIEL, FRANTZ ..... GREGORY SPEAR  
HERMANN ..... J. MICHAEL KOON  
SCHEMIL ..... DAVID L. MICHAEL  
LUTHER, CRESPEL ..... RICHARD E. TEASTER  
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RECITAL II

University of North Texas  
*College of Music*  
*presents*

A Graduate Recital

**RANDAL RUSHING, *tenor***

accompanied by  
Wayne Foster, *piano*

Monday, June 24, 1996

8:00 pm

Concert Hall

*Die schöne Müllerin, Opus 25* ..... Franz Schubert

*Das Wandern*

*Wohin?*

*Halt!*

*Danksagung an den Bach*

*Am Feierabend*

*Der Neugierige*

*Ungeduld*

*Morgengruss*

*Des Müllers Blumen*

*Thränenregen*

*Mein!*

*Pause*

— pause —

*Mit dem grünen Lautenband*

*Der Jäger*

*Eifersucht und Stolz*

*Die liebe Farbe*

*Die böse Farbe*

*Trockne Blumen*

*Der Müller und der Bach*

*Des Baches Wiegenlied*

Presented in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Musical Arts

## RECITAL III

# CARNEGIE HALL

Friday Evening, December 8, 2000, at 8:00  
Isaac Stern Auditorium

## THE ST. CECILIA CHORUS AND ORCHESTRA

David Randolph, *Music Director*

THE CAMERATA CHORALE  
THE ULSTER CHORAL SOCIETY  
Lee H. Pritchard, *Music Director*

David Randolph, *Conductor*

CLAIRE STADTMUELLER, *Soprano*      LILA DEIS, *Soprano*  
RANDAL RUSHING, *Tenor*      CURTIS STREETMAN, *Bass*

Celebrating The St. Cecilia Chorus' 95th anniversary  
and David Randolph's 35th year as its conductor

FINZI	<i>For St. Cecilia</i> (Ceremonial Ode) RANDAL RUSHING
RANDOLPH	<i>Andante for Strings</i>
FINZI	<i>In Terra Pax</i> CURTIS STREETMAN, LILA DEIS
	<i>Intermission</i>
MENDELSSOHN	Symphony No. 2, Op. 52, <i>Lobgesang</i> ("Song of Praise") I. Sinfonia Maestoso con moto—Allegro Allegretto un poco agitato Adagio religioso II. Finale: Chorus CLAIRE STADTMUELLER, RANDAL RUSHING, LILA DEIS

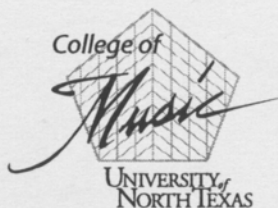
(See within for listing of movements)

Please refrain from applause until the conclusion of each work.  
The official accompanist of The St. Cecilia Chorus is Marijo Newman.  
Orchestra personnel manager: Vincent Carano.

Before the concert begins, please switch off your cell phones and other electronic devices.



## RECITAL IV



*Two hundred ninety-seventh program of the 2001-2002 season.*

A Doctoral Lecture Recital

**RANDAL RUSHING, tenor**

accompanied by  
Greg Ritchey, piano

Monday, March 11, 2002

8:00 pm

Recital Hall

**GUSTAV MAHLER'S *KINDERTOTENLIEDER*:  
SUBJECT AND TEXTUAL CHOICES AND  
ALTERATIONS OF THE FRIEDRICH RÜCKERT POEMS**

**PROGRAM**

Kindertotenlieder (1901-1904) ..... Gustav Mahler  
(1860-1911)

Nun will die Sonn' so hell aufgeh'n!  
Nun seh' ich wohl, warum so dunkle Flammen  
Wenn dein Mütterlein  
Oft denk' ich, sie sind nur ausgegangen!  
In diesem Wetter!

Presented in partial fulfillment of the degree  
Doctor of Musical Arts in Performance  
MUGC 6954.706

*Steinway is the piano of choice for the College of Music.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Gustav Mahler (1860-1911) is known primarily as a symphonic composer of the post-romantic period. Therefore, one might wonder, when he wrote works for the voice, if his chief consideration was with the timbre and sound of the work as a whole, and if he was particularly concerned with “setting” the text; or if the vocal line, although accompanied by the orchestra, was more importantly a vehicle for emitting sounds, not text.

The unique fashion in which Mahler's songs and symphonies permeate each other – a phenomenon not found in previous composers of both forms, such as Schubert, Schumann, and Brahms – has prompted the associated view that he was a symphonist at heart, for whom the musical material of songs was of over-riding interest – material which, separated from its text, did indeed frequently find its way into symphonies.<sup>1</sup>

This study will contend, however, that Gustav Mahler carefully chose his song texts based on their subject matter, in particular, the *Kindertotenlieder* (*Songs on the Death of Children*) of Friedrich Rückert (1788-1866). Additionally, it will illustrate Mahler's interest in the close relationship between text and music.

In choosing his texts to form the *Kindertotenlieder*, Mahler narrowed the field

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Russell, *Light in Battle with Darkness: Mahler's Kindertotenlieder* (Bern: Lang, 1991), 1.

of 425 poems to only 36 that contain similar symbolism. Four of the final five chosen to set to music are from these 36 and contain this symbolism pertaining to various references to light and darkness. Furthermore, Mahler made various changes in the Rückert texts and even accomplished several textual alterations among his own various versions of the *Kindertotenlieder* in various stages before publication.

Most of the writings concerning the *Kindertotenlieder* deal with Mahler's work from a musical standpoint. Mahler's choice of Rückert's poetry and his genuine concern with the literary aspects of his poems are seldom discussed. A notable exception is Peter Russell's excellent book, *Light in Battle with Darkness*.

However, Russell alludes to the fact that the majority of the text alterations between the Rückert and Mahler versions are insignificant. On the contrary, the very fact that Mahler went to the trouble to painstakingly make textual adjustments further substantiates the assertion that he was seriously concerned with the texts he set. Furthermore, Mahler's changes from version to version of the poems before their publication brings further to light the importance he placed on setting the texts.

This study intends to provide the vocal performer of Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder* with material to strengthen and support the literary importance of the work at hand. It should in particular prove valuable to the performer of the voice and piano version, who must, above all be concerned with the depiction and delivery of the text to relay the pathos of these songs without the support of the orchestra.

## MAHLER'S MOTIVATION AND CHOICE OF SUBJECT

Throughout his career, Mahler set no poems from the major German poets. He chose texts from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* folksong collection to set as *Lieder* intermittently in the years 1892 through 1897, then as songs in Symphonies 2, 3, and 4. He used his own poems written in folksong style in *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* (1883-85). He followed these with poems by the relatively minor German poet, Friedrich Rückert: his *Fünf Rückert Lieder* (1901-02) and the *Kindertotenlieder* of 1901-04. Concerning the *Kindertotenlieder*, Peter Russell points out “.... a fundamental weakness of many of the *Kindertotenlieder*: they are versified thoughts, prosaic reflections in rhymed form, rather than the expression of profound and compelling feelings.... Some are banal, maudlin, or sentimental, to our taste; others again are spoilt by self-pity or petulance.”<sup>2</sup>

Mahler carefully selected five poems from the 425 of Rückert's *Kindertotenlieder*. The perception that Mahler considered Rückert a lesser poet is arguable. “Mahler once told a friend it seemed to him profane for composers to set perfect poems to music, 'as if a sculptor chiseled a statue from marble and a painter came along and colored it'. What he found in Rückert was mood and subject matter to stir his imagination.”<sup>3</sup>

Rückert wrote the *Kindertotenlieder* as he anguished over the loss of two of his

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>3</sup> Jonathan Carr, *Mahler*, (Woodstock, NY: 1997), 128.

own children to scarlet fever: Luise, his youngest child and only daughter, aged three, on December 31, 1833, and Ernst, aged five, on January 16, 1834. Three other children, all boys, also contracted the disease, were quite ill, but recovered. It was Easter of 1834 before Rückert and his wife, Luise, could breathe easily again.<sup>4</sup>

The 425 poems of the *Kindertotenlieder* was a tremendous output for the period from the end of 1833 until June of 1834. Clearly, this work provided an outlet for Rückert to grieve, and as he considered the poems a personal exercise and private in nature, they were not published during his lifetime. After his death, they were first published in 1872 for his descendants by his publisher Sauerländer (Frankfurt am Main) with the title: *Friedrich Rückert's Kindertotenlieder: Aus seinem Nachlasse*.<sup>5</sup>

At the time of the deaths of his two children, Friedrich Rückert lived in Erlangen, where he had obtained a professorship in oriental languages. He was quite content in the domestic life as devoted husband and father, who loved the countryside and nature. Many of his poems reflect this, such as the *Haus- und Jahreslieder* of 1841. This work was quite popular in its time, and by 1844 had reached its eighteenth printing. Oddly enough, later in his life, several years after the publication of his collected works in 1867-69 and the new edition in 1881-82, there was a period of relatively little interest in his works. However, there was a resurgence of interest in his poetry during the years

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<sup>4</sup> Russell, 33.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 34.

1895 to 1900. Several different selections of his poetry were chosen for use in schools.

Mahler could have certainly been aware of Rückert and his works.<sup>6</sup>

There are varying opinions and insights as to what sparked Mahler's interest in these poems. The notion that Mahler tempted fate and somehow foretold the death of his own daughter, Maria, in 1907, is hardly acceptable. "There is no reason to make any such assumption. Rückert's poems lament the deaths of his own children: Mahler simply found them suitable material for setting to music, and according with his own temperament. They had nothing to do with his own immediate family or made any kind of prophecy. But they filled Alma with apprehension for all that."<sup>7</sup> Alma Mahler was appalled at his choice and wrote:

I find this incomprehensible. I can understand setting such frightful words to music if one had no children, or had lost those one had... did not write these harrowing elegies solely out of his imagination: they were dictated by the cruelest loss of his whole life. What I cannot understand is bewailing the deaths of children who were in the best of health and spirits... hardly one hour after having kissed and hugged them. I exclaimed at the time: 'For Heaven's sake, don't tempt providence!' <sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Russell, 29.

<sup>7</sup> James Burnett, *The Music of Gustav Mahler* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1985), 42.

<sup>8</sup> Egon Gartenberg, *Mahler: The Man and his Music* (New York: Schirmer, 1978), 288.



Even Alma's objection, though understandable, was not really valid, since Mahler had begun to compose the songs as early as 1901 and completed the cycle in 1904, three years before his daughter Maria's death, a death that was in any case totally unforeseen and unforeseeable.<sup>9</sup> When Mahler wrote some of these songs during the summer of 1901, he was still a bachelor, composing at Maiernigg on the Wörthersee in Carinthia. It was a particularly fruitful summer; four of the *Rückert-Lieder*, some of the *Kindertotenlieder*, *Der Tamboursg'sell* and two movements of the Fifth Symphony were drafted.<sup>10</sup> The remainder of the *Kindertotenlieder* was written in 1904, after his marriage to Alma and the birth of their children.

Thomas Hampson, a baritone who has recorded Mahler's works extensively, also rejects the suggestion that the composition of the *Kindertotenlieder* was a premonition of the death of his own child. "I do not believe in any way that the songs are a premonition, or indicative of Mahler's own personal tragedy. I think (the death of his daughter) is a perverse coincidence of nature"<sup>11</sup> Hampson argues that Mahler's own psychic history explains why he set the *Kindertotenlieder*. "Given the mortality rates of children in the late nineteenth century, death was a fact of life."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>10</sup> Stanley Sadie, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 20 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1980), 11:510.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Hampson, interview by Charles Ward, *Houston Chronicle*, November 22, 1995.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

Mahler certainly had experienced death in his own household firsthand. Eight of his thirteen siblings died. Kurt Blaukopf supports Hampson's assertions and speaks of the deaths of Mahler's siblings:

The fate of these children seems peculiarly tragic to us today; one is tempted to see the parents as living in a continual state of emotional tension, and the young Gustav as severely affected. The frequently made inference, suggesting a unique psychological quality in the future composition of the *Kindertotenlieder*, is based on a misconception. In our own age of low infant mortality it is easy to forget how calmly even Europeans accepted the death of an infant until quite recently. To have brought a child safely through the dangers and potentially mortal illnesses of childhood was something to boast of. Towards the end of the nineteenth century the mortality of children under five still amounted to nearly fifty per cent.<sup>13</sup>

Rückert, however, had experienced a different sort of death, the death of two of his own children, a daughter and a son, of scarlet fever, within two weeks of one another. One of the two children Rückert lost was named Ernst, the name of Mahler's beloved younger brother who had died in 1874. Opposing the opinions of Mr. Hampson and Mr. Blaukopf is Michael Kennedy, who writes “ ...This boy's death was the most searing experience of Mahler's childhood, and one can easily perceive that he would wish, as a

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<sup>13</sup> Kurt Blaukopf, *Gustav Mahler*, trans. Inge Goodwin (New York: 1973), 20.

mature artist, to commemorate him.”<sup>14</sup> His first attempt at a commemoration was the composition of an opera called *Herzog Ernst von Schwaben*, which unfortunately has not been preserved.

It is interesting to note that none of the *Kindertotendlieder* Mahler chose to set to music can be determined to deal specifically with the young Ernst. Number 1 could deal with either child, as could Number 2. Numbers 4 and 5 refer to both children, while Number 3 clearly focuses on the *daughter*, Luise.

On the evening of February 24, 1901, Mahler's ill health, exhaustion, and overwork (he had conducted a concert that afternoon and an opera that evening) almost culminated in his death. Mahler had moved to New York, where he was one of the principle conductors at the Metropolitan Opera, along with Arturo Toscanini. Additionally, he had been appointed musical director and conductor of the New York Philharmonic. Because of his weakened condition, he suffered a hemorrhage late that night and was constantly monitored, eventually stabilized and recovered. He required two operations and an extended period of convalescence.

A thesis by the psychoanalyst Stuart Feder provides an additional analysis and possible reasons for Mahler's interest in the *Kindertotenlieder*. His view of the crisis on February 24 leads him to consider four points:

- (1) Mahler's crisis shocked him into the thought of having children of his own “as a gateway to immortality”;
- (2) his whirlwind courtship of Alma Schindler resulted

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<sup>14</sup> Michael Kennedy, *Mahler* (New York: Schirmer, 1990) 133.

from his wish to have children; (3) he relieved his persistent conflict in his preoccupation about death in thought, art, and life, by embracing the concept of conquering death by birth; and (4) he symbolized his wish to have children in the *Kindertotenlieder* in the form of a mourning parent, a symbol that also reflects the opposite concept of death by birth.<sup>15</sup>

Edward Kravitt suggests further reasons for Mahler's attraction to Rückert:

The question of what attracted Mahler to Rückert, a minor, relatively neglected poet, provides further important pieces of our puzzle. For Mahler, Rückert's poetry embodied the composer's new attitude toward existence, one that was crystallized in the crisis of February 24, 1901. After 1901, Mahler directed his long-burdened and obsessive thoughts on death and the hereafter into new channels. He changed his earlier quasi-Catholic view of the Resurrection in favor of a mystical outlook expressed primarily in the writings of Fechner. Fechner's philosophy and panpsychism—his belief that the entire cosmos is animate—became of central importance to Mahler.<sup>16</sup>

Mahler's mystical “feeling” about existence was shared by Rückert. The mystical quality of Eastern philosophy was of interest to them both. Rückert lectured in Heidelberg about Greek and Oriental mythology before becoming Professor of Oriental

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 353.

<sup>16</sup> Edward F. Kravitt, “Mahler's Dirges for his Death: February 24, 1901,” *The Music Quarterly* 64, no. 3 (1978): 349.

Languages in Erlangen.

Mahler's biographical details relating to death and the possible link they have to his apparent preoccupation with death are inevitably mentioned in program notes and in liner notes of recordings of the *Kindertotenlieder*. “The comparison they evoke in the listener seems – strange as this may sound – actually to detract from the immediate effect of the songs. The *Kindertotenlieder* usher in a new era of composition. The association with Mahler's personal tragedy blunts our perceptions to the historical significance of the music”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Blaukopf, 198.

## KINDERTOTENLIEDER AS A SONG CYCLE

The complete orchestra used for the *Kindertotenlieder* consists of:

Piccolo	2 Bassoons	Harp
2 Flutes	Contrabassoon	Celeste
2 Oboes	Tympani	Violin I and II
English Horn	Glockenspiel	Viola
2 Clarinets	Bells	Celli
2 Bass Clarinets	Tamtam	Bass

This sort of orchestration was a radical departure for Mahler and is considered by many to be the beginning of composition for the chamber orchestra. The first four songs do not even employ the full orchestra. Not until the fifth tumultuous song, “In diesem Wetter” (In This Weather), does one experience the full impact of the orchestration listed above, small as it may be.

After Rückert's death, with the publication of Rückert's *Kindertotenlieder*, the collection of poems was divided into sections corresponding to the various stages of his grief: “*Lied und Leid*” (“Song and Suffering”), “*Krankheit und Tod*” (“Sickness and Death”), *Winter und Frühling* (“Winter and Spring”) and “*Trost und Erhebung*” (“Solace and Exaltation”). This 1872 edition, the Sauerländer publication with the title: *Friedrich Rückert's Kindertotenlieder: Aus seinem Nachlasse*, was followed by an edition brought out by Rückert's sister, Marie, in 1881. She reduced their number to 241, however, removing those she perceived as too personal or private in nature. The sections of this edition were re-named “*Leid: Luise. Dezember 1833*”; “*Ernst. Januar 1834*”;

“*Unzertrennlich*” (“Inseparable”); “*Trost und Erhebung*” (as in the 1872 edition); and “*Zeit und Ewigkeit*” (“Time and Eternity”). There were no more editions of the *Kindertotenlieder* published until 1988.<sup>18</sup>

As noted earlier, Mahler narrowed the field of 425 poems to 36, based on their common references to imagery of darkness and light, and four of the final five contain these references. The fifth poem, while not containing obvious references to this imagery, functions to “.... summarize and subsume such imagery .... (and) indicates that Mahler chose his texts with a specific awareness of their symbolic patterns.”<sup>19</sup>

The setting of the five songs in Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder* constitutes a song cycle in the truest sense for several reasons. Not only are the poems all from the same poet, they were written and intended by the poet as a collection, all dealing with a central theme, the loss of his two children. Sorrow permeates the entire cycle. With the exception of the fifth and final song, the songs are linked by their similar orchestration. The key scheme of the various movements is symmetrical:

Song I: D minor (D major)

Song II: C minor (C major)

Song III: C minor

Song IV: E-flat major (E-flat minor)

Song V: D minor (D major)

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<sup>18</sup> Russell, 35.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 57.

The first and fifth songs are related in key; while the first moves only briefly into D major before resuming the minor, the last moves decisively into a final D major key. The second and fourth songs are also related in key, the fourth song being in the relative major of the second. The third, despite its identity of key with the second song, stands alone as a centerpiece, and is the only song to remain in the same key throughout.<sup>20</sup>

The following ideas are presented in the five songs:

- (1) The sunrise that brings no comfort;
- (2) memories of the children's star-like eyes;
- (3) habitual actions that evoke too vivid memories;
- (4) a vision that the children have only wandered away into another world,  
where their parents will one day find them again.<sup>21</sup>

The final song depicts a storm, raging on the day of the funeral and, in turn, the disturbing grief of the devastated father, and finally, "...the peace and haven the children have found in spite of the storm-- a haven of eternal sleep."<sup>22</sup>

Throughout the *Kindertotenlieder*, there are numerous references to the imagery

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>18</sup> Deryck Cooke, *Gustav Mahler: An Introduction to his Music* (New York:Cambridge University Press, 1980) 77.

<sup>22</sup> Kravitt, 77.



of light and dark. Peter Russell makes much of this, and points to Mahler's close brush with death on February 24, 1901.

At this point in his life, it would seem, no doubt chiefly as a result of his near-fatal illness of February 1901 and a consequent mood of intense introspection, Mahler had turned away from nature and into himself: unresponsive to the world outside, he was engaged in the troubled probing of a world of darkness. Thus, he was not drawn to nature, but to poems characterized by imagery of darkness and light: four of his five *Kindertotenlieder* are in this category.<sup>23</sup>

He goes on to detail the significance of the number of poems that deal with the imagery of darkness and light. Of the 425 poems, only 36 make use of the imagery of brightness and shadow, day and night, sunshine, lamplight, candlelight, flames, and the radiance of eyes. These 36 poems are found dispersed throughout the collection, and it is evident that Mahler sought them out and chose from them his five song texts “.... with a specific awareness of their symbolic patterns.”<sup>24</sup> A table created by Peter Russell to detail these texts dealing with such symbolic patterns evident in songs one through four is reproduced below in Table 1:<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Russell, 56.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 56-57.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 66.

Table 1: Symbolic Patterns and Imagery of Darkness and Light

	Song 1		Song 2	
Stanza 1	- die Sonn' - so hell aufgeh'n - die Nacht	- the sun - so brightly rise - the night	- Nun seh' ich wohl - dunkle Flammen - ihr sprühtet - in manchem Augenblicke - O Augen! - voll in einem Blicke	- Now I see fully - dark flames - you flashed - in many instances (lit. eye-glances) - O eyes! - fully in one glance
Stanza 2	- die Sonne - scheint allgemein	- the sun - shines for all	- Nebel... vom ver- blendenden Geschicke - der Strahl - von wannen alle Strahlen stammen	- Fog... woven by blinding destiny  - the beam (of light) - to the source of all beams
Stanza 3	- die Nacht - ins ew'ge Licht	- the night - in everlating light	- mit eurem Leuchten	- with your lights
Stanza 4	- Ein Lämplein verlosch - Heil sei dem Freudenlicht der Welt!	- a lamp went out  - hail to the gladdening light of the world!	- Sieh' uns nur an - nur Augen - in diesen Tagen - in künft'gen Nächten - Sterne	- Look at us well - only eyes - in these days - in future nights - stars
	Song 3		Song 4	
Stanza 1	- fällt auf ihr Gesicht erst der Blick mir nicht - wenn du freudenhelle	- at her face, falls my first glance not - when you, bright with happiness	- Der Tag ist schön!	- The day is beautiful
Stanza 2	- der Kerze Schimmer - zu schnelle erloschn'er Freudenschein	- the candle shimmers - to quickly extinguished gladdening light	- der Tag ist schön	- the day is beautiful
Stanza 3			- auf jenen Höh'n im Sonnenschein! - Der Tag ist schön auf jenen Höh'n!	- on those heights in sunshine! - The day is beautiful on those heights
Stanza 4				

David Holbrook supports this light and darkness idea, relating this symbolism to ...his (Mahler's) experience of a loved brother's death: despite all the love and play could bestow on Ernst, Death inexorably swept the child away. The memory of those lost eyes haunted him and was exacerbated by his troubled experience of all eyes into which he subsequently gazed. In the *Kindertotenlieder*, he sets poems ...which are all about light, seeing, and eyebeams, around the subject of death.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> David Holbrook, *Gustav Mahler and the Courage To Be* (London: Vision Press: 1975) 17.

## VERSIONS OF MAHLER'S *KINDERTOTENLIEDER*

In the *Revisionsbericht* (Critical Edition) compiled by Zoltan Roman for the publication of the *Sämtlichewerke Gustav Mahlers*, he references several sources:

- Ms I: Autograph manuscript of Lieder 2-5 for Voice and Piano; property of Mr. Robert O. Lehman, in the possession of the Pierpont Library, New York.
- Ms II: Autograph manuscript of the full Orchestra Parts for Voice and Orchestra, Property of Mr. Robert O. Lehman, in the possession of the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York.
- StV I: Handwritten *Stichvorlage* (copyist manuscript) for Voice and Piano in the *Gustav Mahler Archiv, Internationale Gustav Mahler Gesellschaft*, Vienna. This carries an embossed seal of the Publisher (C. F. Kahnt) and the copyright date (1905), and the five *Lieder* are certified with the plate numbers 4459a to 4459e. The second song is in two versions, one a half step lower than the original.
- StV II: Handwritten *Stichvorlage* (copyist manuscript) of the Orchestral Parts in the *Gustav Mahler Archiv, Internationale Gustav Mahler Gesellschaft*, Vienna. This carries an embossed seal of the Publisher (C. F. Kahnt) and

the copyright date (1905), and the five *Lieder* are certified with the plate numbers 4460a to 4460e.

BA I: Galley Proof of the Version for Voice and Piano, in the Stafford University Library (USA).

EA I: First Edition of the Version for Voice and Piano, published in 1905 by C. F. Kahnt's successor, Leipzig, Germany. Plate Numbers; 4459a to 4459e. Only German Text.

EA II: First Edition of the Version for Voice and Orchestra, published in 1905 by C. F. Kahnt's successor, Leipzig, Germany. Plate Numbers; 4460a to 4460e. Only German Text.

The exact edition of Rückert's *Kindertotenlieder* that Mahler took to set to music is not known.

## EXAMINATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL SONGS

For each of the following five songs, a text table appears after the individual song's title. Each table contains Rückert's original text, Mahler's text setting, listings of Mahler's textual alterations, and a translation. The translations are the writer's and are not intended to be poetic, but literal, in order to reflect an exact translation as accurately as possible. The translations are of the Mahler version, not of Rückert's version. Words in **bold** print in the tables signify differences between the Rückert and Mahler texts.

The abbreviations used above to signify Mahler's several versions of the *Kindertotenlieder* will be used in the narrative below.

1. Nun will die Sonn' so hell aufgehen (*Now will the Sun so Brightly Rise*)

Table 2: Nun will die Sonn' so hell aufgehen

<p>Rückert:</p> <p>Nun will die Sonne so hell aufgehn Als sei kein Unglück die Nacht geschehn.</p> <p>Das Unglück geschah auch mir allein, Die Sonne, sie scheintet allgemein.</p> <p>Du mußt die Nacht nicht in dir verschrenken, Mußt sie ins ewige Licht versenken.</p> <p>Ein Lämpchen verlosch in meinen Zelt, Heil sei dem Freudenlichte der Welt!</p>	<p>Mahler:</p> <p>Nun will die <b>Sonn'</b> so hell <b>aufgeh'n</b> Als sei kein Unglück, <b>kein Unglück</b> die Nacht <b>gescheh'n!</b></p> <p>Das Unglück geschah <b>nur</b> mir allein! Die Sonne, <b>die Sonne</b>, sie scheintet allgemein!</p> <p>Du mußt <b>nicht die Nacht</b> in dir <b>verschränken</b>, Mußt sie ins <b>ew'ge Licht</b>, ins ew'ge Licht versenken!</p> <p>Ein <b>Lämplein</b> verlosch in meinen Zelt! Heil! <b>Heil</b> sei dein <b>Freudenlicht</b> der Welt, <b>dem Freudenlicht der Welt!</b></p>
<p>Translation:</p> <p>Now will the sun so brightly rise, As if no misfortune occurred last night!</p> <p>The misfortune befell just me alone! The sun shines for all.</p> <p>You must not enfold the night within you. You must submerge it in eternal light.</p> <p>A lamp went out in my tent! Hail to the gladdening light of the world!</p>	<p>Changes:</p> <p>Stanza 1: “Sonne”to “Sonn’“, “aufgehn”to “aufgeh’n”, repeat of “Unglück”, “geschehn”to “gescheh’n”</p> <p>Stanza 2: “auch”to “nur”, repeat of “dieSonne”</p> <p>Stanza 3: “die Nacht nicht”to “nicht die Nacht”, “verschrenken”to “verschränken”, “ewige”to “ew’ge”, repeat of “ins ew’ge Licht”</p> <p>Stanza 4: “Lämpchen”to “Lämplein”, repeat of “Heil”, repeat of “dem Freudenlicht der Welt”</p>

The first poem of the cycle “Nun will die Sonn’“ was written on the morning after the death of a child the previous night. Rückert's grief is contrasted with the unchanged world around him.<sup>27</sup> The listener is immediately aware of the sparse

<sup>27</sup>. Kravitt, p. 341

orchestration.

A single oboe in duet with solo horn begins a mournful counterpoint. The simple, almost note against note introduction prepares for the initial spoken words “Nun will die Sonn' so hell auf geh'n” (Now will the sun so brightly rise), then interrupts the vocal line, as if to depict the grieving parent who has difficulty speaking further and finishing the sentence.

Ex.1: “Nun will die Sonn’“

**Langsam und schwermütig; nicht schleppend.**

2 Flöten.

1 Oboe.

2 Clarinetten in B.

Baß-Clarinetten in B.

2 Fagotte.

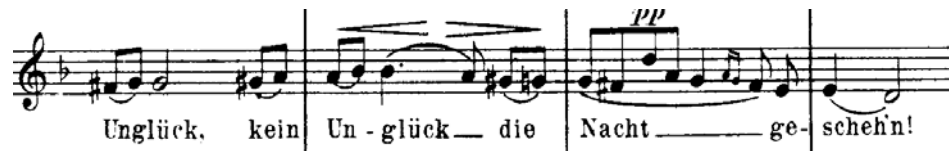
Horn I in F.

The poem is a setting in four rhyming couplets in iambic tetrameter. “‘Alternate orchestras' divide them: all first lines have 'bare' orchestration, while strings and a warmer sound back second lines. And so goes the parent, bludgeoned between grief and



consolation.”<sup>28</sup> The last word of the first couplet carries the same rhythmic figure found throughout the first movement of Symphony Nr. 5.

Ex. 2: “Nun will die Sonn”



Ex. 3: Symphony No. 5, First Movement



### Mahler's Alterations of the Rückert Text

In Stanza 1, Mahler changed Rückert's original “Sonne” to “Sonn” (sun) to continue the one-syllable to one-note pattern. His choice to use the contractions “aufgeh'n” (rise) and “gescheh'n” (happened) instead of Rückert's “aufgehen” and “geschehn” is insignificant. Had he chosen the complete words, “aufgehen” and “gestehen,” it would have added an awkward third syllable and upset the rhyme scheme.

The significant word change in the second stanza is Mahler's replacement of “auch” (also) with “nur” (only). To Rückert, his child's death from scarlet fever struck

<sup>28</sup> Mitch Friefeld *Kindertotenlieder*, {Online} Available <http://www.mahlerfest.org/2001/kindertl.htm> January 21, 2002.

him individually (“allein”) among others who mourned for their loved ones. Mahler intensifies the misfortune, using the lonely “nur,” instead of “auch”, which could imply one among many.

In Stanza 3, Mahler rearranged the words from “Du mußt die Nacht nicht” (You must the night not) to “Du mußt nicht die Nacht” (You must not the night), providing the emphasis on the noun “Nacht” on the downbeat. He also changes the three-syllable “ewige” (eternal) to the contraction “ew'ge” for a smoother vocal line, repeating “ins ew'ge Licht” (in the eternal light) to reflect the poignancy of the eternal light, setting the text to an ascending line, which reaches the highest pitch in this song, before haltingly descending to the lowest pitch of the phrase, on the word “versenken” (submerge).

The single alteration in Stanza 4 occurs when the word “Lämpchen” (little lamp) becomes “Lämplein,” and could be considered an insignificant change, especially since the two words have the same meaning, a diminutive form of the word: lamp. However, the “-lein” suffix in “Lämplein” does provide the singer a better vowel to sustain than the “-chen” of “lämpchen.” In spoken German, one would speak the “-chen” as an unstressed syllable. Mahler's choice to set “-lein” instead of “-chen” on a sustained note points to his detailed attention to text setting.

Ex. 4: “Nun will die Sonn’”



“Freudenlichte” becomes “Freudenlicht,” changing from the plural “gladdening lights” to “gladdening light.” This could serve to point out a single light, a symbol of a singular power or force, rather than several dispersed lights.

There are no text changes among Mahler's various versions.

Rückert's use of symbolism, reversing darkness and sunrise, night and life, and death with eternal light is reflected by Mahler. Mahler set the initial text concerning a rising sun to a descending vocal line. The advent of day was met with tragedy. “Du musst die Nacht” (You must the night) ascends. His repetition of “Die Sonne” in Stanza 2 amplifies the fact that the sun shines so brightly for everyone else, but that the grieving parent is in darkness. The repetition of “ew'ge Licht” in line 12 (eternal light) prolongs the idea of the eternal.

The appearance of a glockenspiel in the bars 20, 21, and 22 is significant, as is its position in the last measure as the single instrument, concluding the song. Donald Mitchell writes that the bell sound could depict a child's toy,<sup>29</sup> while Constantine Floros has observed in Mahler's works:

The glockenspiel as a rule fulfills symbolic function when it is not used as a piano-like melodic instrument, but is treated like a bell, that is, when its part in the score is limited to the repetition of isolated, usually long-ringing notes. The investigation of those symphonic movements of Mahler which have a textual

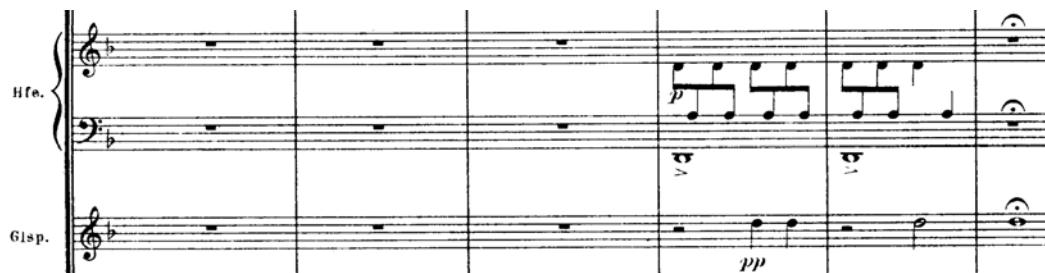
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<sup>29</sup> Donald Mitchell, *Songs and Symphonies of Life and Death* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 78.

basis reveals that the glockenspiel in these cases – like the ringing of bells – serves very often as a symbol of eternity, and in particular symbolizes the “music of angels” the *musica coelestis* or *angelica*.<sup>30</sup>

The “ew'ge Licht” (everlasting light) in Stanza 3, then, could be suggested by the bells. “As we shall see, the glockenspiel has an important role to play in the fifth song, at a point where it unequivocally signals the victory of light over darkness.”<sup>31</sup>

Ex. 5: “Nun will die Sonn’“



<sup>30</sup> Constantin Floros, *Vol. II: Mahler und die Symphonik des 19. Jahrhunderts in neuer Deutung* Wiesbaden, Breitkopf & Härtel, 1985. 321

<sup>31</sup> Russell, 70

## 2. Nun seh ich wohl (Now I See Clearly)

Table 3. Nun seh ich wohl

<p>Rückert:</p> <p>Nun seh' ich wohl, warum so dunkle Flammen Ihr sprühtet mir in manchem Augenblicke, O Augen, gleichsam um in einem Blicke Zu drängen eure ganze Macht zusammen.</p> <p>Dort ahnt' ich nicht, weil Nebel mich umschwammen, Gewoben vom verblendenden Geschicke, Daß sich der Strahl bereits zur Heimkehr schicke Dorthin, von wannen alle Strahlen stammen.</p> <p>Ihr wolltet mir mit eurem Leuchten sagen: Wir möchten nah dir <b>immer</b> bleiben gerne, Doch ist uns das vom Schicksal abgeschlagen.</p> <p>Sieh' recht uns an! Denn bald sind wir dir ferne. Was dir noch Augen sind in diesen Tagen, In künft'gen Nächten sind es dir nur Sterne.</p>	<p>Mahler:</p> <p>Nun seh' ich wohl, warum so dunkle Flammen Ihr sprühtet mir in manchem Augenblicke, O Augen! <b>O Augen!</b> Gleichsam um <b>voll</b> in einem Blicke Zu drängen eure ganze Macht zusammen.</p> <p>Dort ahnt' ich nicht, weil Nebel mich umschwammen, Gewoben vom verblendenden Geschicke, Daß sich der Strahl bereits zur Heimkehr schicke, Dorthin, <b>dorthin</b> von wannen alle Strahlen stammen.</p> <p>Ihr wolltet mir mit eurem Leuchten sagen: Wir möchten nah dir bleiben gerne, Doch ist uns das vom Schicksal abgeschlagen.</p> <p><b>Sieh' uns nur an</b>, denn bald sind wir dir ferne! Was dir <b>nur</b> Augen sind in diesen Tagen: In künft'gen Nächten sind es dir nur Sterne.</p>
<p>Translation:</p> <p>Now I see fully, why such dark flames You flashed at me in many instances, Oh eyes! As if in a single look To fully concentrate all your power.</p> <p>But I didn't suspect, because of the fog which hovered around me, Woven by blinding destiny, That this bright beam already sought to journey Back home there to the source of all beams.</p> <p>You wanted to say to me with your shining: We would like to stay near you. But that is denied us by fate.</p> <p>Look at us well, for soon we will be far from you. What are only eyes to you in these days, In future nights will be but stars to you.</p>	<p>Changes: Rückert to Mahler</p> <p>Stanza 1: "O Augen" repeated, "voll" inserted before "in einem Blicke"</p> <p>Stanza 2: "dorthin" repeated</p> <p>Stanza 3: "immer" omitted</p> <p>Stanza 4: "Sieh' recht uns an" to "Sieh' uns nur an", "dir noch Augen" to "dir nur Augen"</p>

“Nun seh ich wohl” begins with a figure found to be quite similar in Mahler's Adagietto movement of Symphony No. 5. “The melodic style of the song, above all its thrusting appoggiaturas, is very close indeed to that of the Adagietto, and so is the sound of the song's instrumentation. The combination of the strings and harp, a predominant impression one has of the song, is precisely the orchestral color of the Adagietto.”<sup>32</sup>

Ex. 6 “Nun seh ich Wohl”

Musical score for Ex. 6, “Nun seh ich Wohl”. The score is for Violinen I & II, Violen, Violoncelli, and Kontrabässe. The tempo is “Ruhig, nicht schleppend” and the instruction is “senza sordino”. The score includes various dynamics like *ppp*, *pp*, *sf*, and *p*, and articulations like *pizz.* and *arco*. The Violoncelli part has a section marked “non rit. sul A”.

Ex. 7: Symphony No. 5, Adagietto

Musical score for Ex. 7, Symphony No. 5, Adagietto. The score is for Harfe and Erste Violinen. The tempo is “Sehr langsam” and “molto rit. a tempo (molto Adagio)”. The score includes various dynamics like *ppp*, *pp*, and *sf*, and articulations like *espress.* and *seelenvoll*.

<sup>32</sup> Donald Mitchell, *Gustav Mahler: The Wunderhorn Years*, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1976), 37.

“Nun seh ich wohl” contains yet more symbolism. In Stanza 1, the reference to darkly glowing flames “.... suggests that beyond the dark flames lies a greater reality.... knowledge of this reality is suggested first through the connotations of eyes: “O Augen, O Augen,” repeated by Mahler later in line 5. Eyes suggest light, enlightenment, they are the light of the soul, the light of inner reality.”<sup>33</sup> Various references to eyes and their symbols occur throughout the poem: “Augenblicke” (instance, or blink of an eye) and “Blicke” (glance) in Stanza 1, “Strahlen” (beams) in Stanza 2, “Leuchten” (lights) in Stanza 3, and “Sterne” (stars) in Stanza 4.

This poem is a Petrarchan or Italian sonnet, which consists of an octave (eight-line stanza) and a sestet (six-line stanza). Rückert's two initial quatrains make up the octave and the following two stanzas of three lines each make up the sestet. Each line of the poem contains 11 syllables. The rhyme scheme is abba abba cdc dcd.

As noted by Russell, the two tercets (sestet) proved awkward for the composer, and Mahler solved the problem by creating the missing fourth line in each of the last two stanzas musically; that is, by inserting orchestral material to finish the stanza.<sup>34</sup>

Mahler retains the integrity of the setting, providing musical climaxes beginning in bars 28 and 60, corresponding to the penultimate lines in the octave and the sestet, where textually the most intensity occurs, expressing the eternally renewing light and the

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<sup>33</sup>Kravitt, 343

<sup>34</sup>Russell, 76.

connection to the cosmos as the eyes become stars, hinting toward Mahler's ideas of mysticism:

Daß sich der Strahl bereits zur Heimkehr schicke	That this bright beam already sought to journey
Dorthin, von wannen alle Strahlen stammen.	Back home there to the source of all beams.

Was dir noch Augen sind in diesen Tagen,	What are only eyes to you in these days,
In künft'gen Nächten sind es dir nur Sterne.	In future nights will be but stars to you.

Ex. 8: "Nun seh ich Wohl"

*Poco più moto.*  
*Etwas bewegter.*

Strahl bereits zur Heimkehr schi-cke, dort - hin, dort - hin, von

Ex. 9: "Nun seh ich Wohl"

*p rit.*

Was dir nur Au - gen sind in die-sen

*Poco più moto.*  
*Etwas bewegter.*

Ta - gen: in künft' - gen Näch - ten sind es dir nur



Upon first examination, the predominance of appoggiaturas is obvious. “The words that provide the rhyme scheme in Rückert's sonnet – “Flammen,” “Augen,” “zusammen,” “umschwammen,” and so forth, -- are all, with the exception of “stammen” and “Sterne,” set as appoggiaturas, thereby highlighting, by means of a local expressive dissonance, the superior syllabic accent.”<sup>35</sup>

#### Mahler's Alterations of the Rückert Text

As stated above, in Stanza 1, Mahler added an additional “O Augen” for emphasis. He inserted the word “voll” (fully) to strengthen the statement “in einem Blicke” (in a single glance, or instance).

In Stanza 2, the word “dorthin” (from there) is repeated by Mahler, as if to stress the importance of the source of the beams and poignancy of the fact that the eyes of the child are to become but a memory when they return to the place “... to the source of all beams.”

In Stanza 3, the word “immer” (always) is deleted for the Mahler version. Rückert had included the word to retain the 11- syllable line pattern, a constant throughout the poem.

In Stanza 4, Rückert's “Sieh' recht uns an” (Look at us well) was changed by Mahler to the similar “Sieh uns nur an” (Just look at us). However, one could suggest that the word “nur” could mean “only” instead of “just.” In this sense, Mahler could be

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<sup>35</sup> V. Kofi Agawu, “The Musical Language of Kindertotenlieder No. 2,” *Journal of Musicalology*, 2, no.1 (1883): 84.

clarifying the point that the dying eyes of the child are directing the grieving father to direct his attention singularly to the eyes, and to nothing else.

### Text Alterations among Mahler's Versions

In Stanza 1, Mahler changed the tense of the Rückert's "sprühtet" (emitted flames, flashed) to the present tense "sprühet" for the StV II and EA II versions, but returned to the original "sprühtet" for the final versions. The decision to remain in the past tense strengthens the fact that the eyes flashed in the past and are no more.

In the EA I, Mahler strengthens Rückert's "... in manchem Augenblicke, O Augen... with "... in manchem Augenblicke, O Augen!" (in many instances, o eyes!), but goes one step further for the final versions by declaring "... in manchem Augenblicke. O Augen! O Augen!" placing a period after "Augenblicke" and repeating "O Augen!"

The first word of the second stanza, "Dort" (There) apparently was misprinted in the piano version as "Doch" (However).

There are no changes from version to version in Stanza 3.

Concerning Stanza 4, in the EA I, "... bleiben gerne! Doch ist uns..." (...like to stay near you! However that is denied us...) is used instead of the form used in all of the other versions, "... bleiben gerne, doch ist uns..." eliminating the exclamation point. Mahler's other versions, in which the phrase "... doch ist uns..." remains a clause with a comma instead of an exclamation point could depict an even more resigned outlook by the father.

### 3. “Wenn dein Mütterlein” (When You Dear Mother)

Table 4. Wenn dein Mütterlein

Rückert:	Mahler:	Translation:
<p>Wenn zur Tür herein Tritt dein Mütterlein Mit der Kerze Schimmer, Ist es mir als immer, Kämost du mit herein, Huschtest hinterdrein Als wie sonst ins Zimmer. Träum ich, bin ich wach, Oder seh' ich schwach Bei dem Licht, dem matten? Du nicht, nur ein Schatten Folgt der Mutter nach. Immer bist du, ach, Noch der Mutter Schatten</p> <p>Wenn dein Mütterlein Tritt zur Tür herein, Und den Kopf ich drehe, Ihr entgegen sehe, Fällt auf ihr Gesicht Erst der Blick mir nicht, Sondern auf der Stelle Näher nach der Schwelle, Dort wo würde dein Lieb' Gesichtchen sein, Wenn du freudenhelle Trätest mit herein Wie sonst, mein Töchterlein. O du, der Vaterzelle Zu schnelle Erlosch'ner Freudenschein!</p>	<p>Wenn dein Mütterlein Tritt zur Tür herein, Und den Kopf ich drehe, Ihr entgegen sehe, Fällt auf ihr Gesicht Erst die Blicke nicht, Sondern auf der Stelle Näher, <b>näher</b> nach der Schwelle, Dort, <b>dort</b> wo würde dein Lieb' Gesichtchen sein, Wenn du freudenhelle Trätest mit herein, <b>Trätest mit herein</b> wie sonst, mein Töchterlein.</p> <p><b>Wenn dein Mütterlein tritt zur Tür herein,</b> Mit der Kerze Schimmer, Ist es mir als immer, Kämost du mit herein, Huschtest hinterdrein Als wie sonst ins Zimmer! O du, <b>o du des Vaters Zelle,</b> <b>Ach,</b> zu schnelle, <b>zu schnell</b> Erlosch'ner Freudenschein, <b>Erlosch'ner Freudenschein!</b></p>	<p>When you mother Comes in through the door, And I turn my head, To look toward her, At her face, Falls my first glance not, But at the place Nearer the threshold, There, where your Little dear face would be, If you, bright with happiness Were walking in with her, As you used to, my little daughter.</p> <p>When your mother Comes in through the door, With the shimmering candle, It is always to me as if You would be coming with her, Slipping in behind her, Into the room as you used to. Oh you, oh you of your fathers cell, Alas, too quickly, too quickly The gladdening light extinguished, The gladdening light extinguished.</p>
<p>Changes:</p> <p>Mahler begins with second stanza of the poem, but omits the last three lines; then uses the first half of the first stanza, neglects the second half, and ends with the three lines previously omitted from the end of the second stanza.</p> <p>Mahler Stanza 1: repeat of “näher”, “dort”, and “trätest mit herein” Mahler Stanza 2: reversal of opening to read “Wenn dein Mütterlein/ Tritt zur Tür herein” to match Stanza 1;</p> <p>last three lines repeat of “O du, der Vaterzelle” to “des Vaters Zelle,” insertion of “ach,” repeat of “zu schnelle” and “erlosch'ner Freudenschein”</p>		

Of the five songs, Mahler reconstructed “Wenn dein Mütterlein” most extensively. Mary Dargie<sup>36</sup> considered the poem inferior and suggested that Mahler not only set the poetry well musically, but that he improved the poem itself by implementing his changes.

Rückert's poem presents the following pattern: a pair of two 5-syllable lines followed by two 6-syllable lines, followed by two 5-syllable lines, then a six syllable line. This repeats to form the complete first stanza. The meter for the 5-syllable lines sounds like two feet in trochaic meter followed by one foot of *spondee*, which is even stress on two syllables. Mahler solves this irregularity by using 3/2 meter, with the concluding half note of the bar providing the stress through duration, corresponding to the *spondee*. For the 6-syllable lines, the use of 4/4 time accommodates the poetry.

This alternating meter is not invasive, and in the orchestra, Mahler's use of the pizzicato celli as an irregular “walking” bass along with the steadily moving eighth-notes in the upper winds perfectly depicts the aimless footsteps of the grieving mother as she approaches the door to the room where the father is.

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<sup>36</sup> E. Mary Dargie, *Music and Poetry in the Songs of Gustav Mahler*. (Bern: Lang, 1981) 313.

Ex. 10: “Wenn dein Mütterlein”

8 Fließender

Fl. I *pp ohne Ausdruck*

Ob. *pp ohne Ausdruck* *p molto espr.*

EH. *pp*

Fg. I *pp* *p molto espr.*

Hf. *p*

Fließender  
schwermütig

Singst. Wenn dein Müt - ter - lein tritt zur Tür her - ein,

Vc. *p*

The father hears the approaching steps and turns to look; not at the mother, but at her side, near where the little girl's face would have been. Of the five songs, “Wenn dein Mütterlein” is the only one that specifically concerns a single child, the daughter.

The singer of this cycle must have a good command of the low register of the voice particularly for this song. The low G (in the original key) appears on the words “Töchterlein” (dear little daughter) and “freudenschein” (the gladdening light). This exclusive use of the low G on these two links their relationship: the dear little daughter .... the gladdening light (too quickly extinguished).<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Mitch Friedfeld, *Kindertotenlieder* {Online} Available <http://www..mahlerfest.org/2001kindertl.htm>

### Mahler's Alterations of the Rückert Texts

The second half of the first stanza of the Rückert original was completely discarded by Mahler. In doing so, Mahler creates two stanzas of similar construction, although not exactly the same length. The discarded part of the Rückert stanza is weak, as if he was grasping at words to fit the rhyme scheme, for example “Traum ich, bin ich wach, Oder seh ich schwach/ Bei dem Licht, dem Matten? “ (literally: Dream I, am I awake, or see I weakly/ by the light, the dull?).

Mahler's version begins with Rückert's Stanza 2. However, he struck the last three lines, and instead continued with the first half of Rückert's Stanza 1, omitting the previously mentioned second half, and concludes with the three lines formerly omitted from Rückert's Stanza 2.

In Mahler's first stanza, the repeating of “näher” (nearer) in line 8 and the word “dort” (there) in line 9 implies an intensification with placement or movement. Rückert imagines exactly the places where the child could be, were he living. “Trätest mit herein” is also repeated toward the end of the stanza, again on words depicting movement (walking in with her).

For his second stanza, Mahler changed Rückert's “Wenn zur Tür herein tritt dein Mütterlein” (When through the door comes in your dear mother) to “Wenn dein Mütterlein tritt zur Tür herein”(When your dear mother comes in through the door), improving the sentence structure by making the phrase less awkward.

“O du, der Vaterzelle” (Oh you, the Father cell) of Rückert becomes Mahler's “O du, o du des Vaters Zelle” (Oh you the cell of the father). One could argue that the

meanings are essentially the same. However, I see in Rückert's version the application of “father cell” as a name or label, whereas in Mahler's “Vaters Zelle”, the possessive form “Vaters Zelle”(Father's cell) takes on the more poignant connotation of the child as his offspring. This intensification of the anguish felt by the father as the vocal line ascends and crescendos is directed in the score by Mahler as “mit ausbrechendem Schmerz” (with an outburst of pain).

#### Text Alterations among Mahler's Versions

The few changes among Mahler's versions deal mostly with punctuation. Toward the end of the first stanza, in the EA II, the comma is placed thusly in the phrase “trätest mit herein, wie sonst mein Töchterlein” (... walking in with her, as usual my darling), but changed for the final versions to “trätest mit herein wie sonst, mein Töchterlein,” not affecting the meaning. In the beginning of the second stanza, the phrase “tritt zur Tür herein,” (comes in through the door) appeared without the comma in the EA II. Likewise, in the EA I, the phrase “ist es mir, als immer” (it is to me, as always) appears without a comma that Mahler used in the final versions after “immer.”

For the final versions, Mahler changed “als wie sonst im Zimmer” (in the room as you used to) of the EA I to “als wie sonst ins Zimmer” (*into* the room as you used to), for a slightly different meaning. And, finally, in the EA I, the phrase “O du, o du des Vaters Zelle/Ach, zu schnelle, zu schnell” was changed to “O du, o du, des Vaters Zelle, ach, zu schnelle, zu schnell”, inserting a comma after the second “o du” and after Zelle.

#### 4. Oft denk' ich, sie sind nur aus gegangen

(Often I Think They've Only Gone Outside)

Table 5. Oft denk' ich, sie sind nur aus gegangen

<p>Rückert:</p> <p>Oft denk' ich, sie sind nur ausgegangen,          Bald werden sie wieder nach Haus gelangen,          Der Tag ist schön, o sei nicht bang,          Sie machen nur einen weitem Gang.</p> <p>Jawohl, sie sind nur ausgegangen,          Und werden jetzt nach Haus gelangen,          O sei nicht bang, der Tag ist schön,          Sie machen den Gang zu jenen Höhn.</p> <p>Sie sind uns nur vorausgegangen,          Und werden nicht hier nach Haus verlangen,          Wir holen sie ein auf jenen Höhn          Im Sonnenschein, der Tag ist schön.</p>	<p>Mahler:</p> <p>Oft denk' ich, sie sind nur ausgegangen!          Bald werden sie wieder nach <b>Hause</b> gelangen!          Der Tag ist schön! O sei nicht bang!          Sie machen nur einen <b>weiten</b> Gang.</p> <p>Jawohl, sie sind nur ausgegangen          Und werden jetzt nach <b>Hause</b> gelangen!          O, sei nicht bang, der Tag ist schön!          Sie machen <b>nur</b> den Gang zu jenen <b>Höh'n!</b></p> <p>Sie sind uns nur vorausgegangen          Und werden nicht wieder nach Haus verlangen!          Wir holen sie ein auf jenen Höh'n          Im Sonnenschein! Der Tag ist schön <b>auf jenen Höh'n!</b></p>
<p>Translation:</p> <p>Often I think they've only gone outside!          Soon they will get back home again!          The day is lovely! Don't be anxious,          They're only taking a long walk.</p> <p>Oh yes, they've only gone out          And will now be reaching home.          Oh don't be anxious, the day is lovely!          They're only taking a walk to those heights!</p> <p>They've only gone out before us,          And will not long to come home again.          We'll catch up with them an those heights          In the sunshine! The day is fine on those heights!</p>	<p>Changes:</p> <p>Stanza 1: "Haus" to "Hause", "weitem" to "weiten"</p> <p>Stanza 2: "Haus" to "Hause", "nur" inserted in last line, "Höhn" to "Höh'n"</p> <p>Stanza 3: "hier" to "wieder", "Höhn" to "Höh'n", repetition of "auf jeden Höh'n"</p>

A narrative follows in "Oft denk' ich, sie sind nur aus gegangen." Songs three and four are more straightforward in nature with less symbolism. Since there is some



discrepancy concerning which of the poems were set in 1901 and which were set in 1904, perhaps it is plausible that songs three and four were composed during the same time period.

A false optimism presents itself musically, as Mahler begins this song in a major key, with a lilting, syncopated cello line supporting the melody of the violins and horns, *divisi* in sixths. The sorrow of the father is immediately apparent upon the entrance of the singer after five bars of major tonality as the vocal line suddenly sings in minor.

This is the most strophic of the songs and Mahler's musical structure corresponds to the structure of the poem. In the first stanza, the singer states that often times it is as if the children have simply gone out and that they will return *back* home. The second stanza reiterates the fact that the children have gone out and that now they will be *reaching* home. But what is home? They are taking a walk to those heights. "Heights" could be suggesting the heavens. The third stanza now states that the children have gone out, but *before* us; in other words, they died before us, and we will some day follow them to those heights. Mahler writes a climatic final phrase for the singer, containing a sequential ascending 4-note figure to culminating on the text "auf jenen Höh'n!" (in those heights!).

Ex. 11: “Oft denk ich, sie sind nur ausgegangen”

The musical score for Ex. 11 is in B-flat major and 4/4 time. It consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has the following lyrics: "- nen - schein! Der Tag ist schön auf je - - nen Höhn!". The piano accompaniment includes several markings: "con accrescimento steigend" above the first staff, "cresc." above the second staff, "rit." above the third staff, "ff" above the fourth staff, "p espr." above the fifth staff, "ritard. zögernd" above the sixth staff, and "pp" above the seventh staff. The score is written for a voice and piano.

Mahler's Alterations of Rückert's Text

There are only a few alterations accomplished by Mahler. One notices initially that he substitutes exclamation points for periods in several instances, serving to impart a more urgent connotation. In the first stanza, he adds an additional syllable to the original “Haus” creating “Hause.” This has no effect on meaning of the word and is clearly included for purely musical reasons, to assign a particular note of the melody to the second syllable of “Hause.” In the last line of the first stanza, “weiteren” (further) becomes “weiten” far. This slightly alters the meaning, indicating that the walk the children are taking is a far one, not a longer or further one than had possibly been take previously.

“Haus” again is changed to “Hause” for the second stanza. In the last line of the stanza, “nur” (only) is inserted to create “Sie machen nur den Gang zu jenen Höh'n”, meaning “They are only (or just) taking a walk to those heights!” “Nur” was used by Rückert in the last line of the first stanza in the similar “Sie machen nur einen weitem Gang”, but curiously omitted in the second stanza. The change in the last line from “Höhn” (heights) to “Höh'n” is insignificant and merely indicates a Mahler's preference to use a contraction of the word “Höhen” with the apostrophe.

Stanza 3 shows Mahler retaining “Haus” without the previously used final “e” syllable in the second line. He replaces “hier” (here) with “wieder” (again), essentially expressing that the children will not long to come *back* again, instead of that the children will not long to come *here* again. Mahler adds an additional “auf jenen Höh'n!” (on those heights!) to conclude the song, emphasizing the reference to the journey of the children to those heights, the heavens.

#### Text Alterations among Mahler's Versions

Among Mahler's changes to the Rückert poems were several replacements of periods with exclamation points. Among his own versions, he makes this substitution a couple of times: first, in the last line of the first stanza, after the word “Gang” (walk) in the EA I, and again after the word “Höh'n” in the third line of the fourth stanza in the EA I. In both cases, he returned to Rückert's original for his final versions.

In the second line of Stanza 3, in the MS II and StV II, Mahler used Rückert's “hier nach” (referred to above) instead of “wieder nach” which appears in the final versions.

## 5. “In diesem Wetter” (In this Weather)

Table 5. In diesem Wetter

Rückert:	Mahler:
<p>In diesem Wetter, in diesem Braus, Nie hätt' ich gesendet die Kinder hinaus; Man hat sie hinaus getragen, Ich durfte dazu nichts sagen.</p> <p>In diesem Wetter, in diesem Saus, Nie hätt' ich gelassen die Kinder hinaus, Ich fürchtete, sie erkranken, Das sind nun eitle Gedanken.</p> <p>In diesem Wetter, in diesem Graus, Hätt' ich gelassen die Kinder hinaus, Ich sorgte, sie stürben morgen, Das ist nun nicht zu besorgen.</p> <p>In diesem Wetter, in diesem Braus, Sie ruhn als wie in der Mutter Haus, Von keinem Sturme erschreckt, Von Gottes Hand bedeckt.</p>	<p>In diesem Wetter, in diesem Braus, Nie hätt' ich gesendet die Kinder hinaus; <b>Man hat sie getragen, getragen hinaus</b> Ich durfte <b>nichts dazu</b> sagen.</p> <p>In diesem Wetter, in diesem Saus, Nie hätt' ich gelassen die Kinder hinaus, Ich fürchtete, sie erkranken; Das sind nun eitle Gedanken.</p> <p>In diesem Wetter, in diesem Graus, <b>Nie</b> hätt' ich gelassen die Kinder hinaus. Ich sorgte, sie stürben morgen, Das ist nun nicht zu besorgen.</p> <p>In diesem Wetter, in diesem <b>Graus!</b> <b>Nie</b> hätt' ich gesendet die Kinder hinaus. Man hat sie hinaus getragen, Ich durfte nichts dazu sagen.</p> <p>In diesem Wetter, <b>in diesem Saus</b>, In diesem Braus, Sie <b>ruh'n, sie ruh'n</b> als wie in der Mutter, <b>Der Mutter</b> Haus. Von keinem Sturm erschreckt, Von Gottes Hand bedeckt, <b>Wie in der Mutter Haus,</b> <b>Wie in der Mutter Haus!</b></p>
Translation:	Changes:
<p>In this weather, in this raging, I would have never sent the children out They have been carried out, I was allowed to say nothing about it.</p>	<p>Stanza 1: “Man hat sie hinaus getragen” to “man hat sie getragen, getragen hinaus”; “dazu” and “nichts” are reversed.</p> <p>Stanza 2: No changes</p>

<p>In this weather, in this rushing, I would have never let the children out. I'd have feared, they would become ill, These are now idle thoughts.</p> <p>In this weather, in this horror, I would have never let the children out. I would have worried, they might die tomorrow; Now that is no cause for concern.</p> <p>In this weather, in this horror, I would have never sent the children out; They have been carried out: I was not allowed to say anything about it!</p> <p>In this weather, in this rushing, this raging, They rest as in their mother's house. Frightened by no storm, covered by God's hand, They rest as in their mother' house!</p>	<p>Stanza 3: Second line prefaced with “Nie”</p> <p>Stanza 4: A repetition of Stanza 1, but with “Graus”, not “Braus” at end of first line</p> <p>Stanza 5: is Rückert's Stanza 4; in first line, “in diesem Saus” inserted before “in diesem Braus”; “ruhn” to “ruh'n”; “sie ruh'n” and “der Mutter” are repeated; in third line “Sturme” without final e; extension at end with “sie ruh'n, sie ruh'n wie in der Mutter Haus, wie in der Mutter Haus!”</p>
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The repetition of words in “In diesem Wetter” is almost as relentless as the driving rain and storm conjured up in the orchestra, which now uses the full instrumentation listed previously. Rückert wrote four stanzas of four lines, each rhyming aabb, and a final six lines that rhyme abacca.

The storm in the orchestra depicts the grieving father's state of mind. The descending quarter notes in thirds in the harp and trilled in the lower strings begin the song, relaying the persistent, nagging thoughts of the father and his self reproach for being so helpless in “allowing” them to be taken away.

Ex. 12: “In diesem Wetter”

Harfen.

Pauken.  
Glöckchen.  
Tam-tam.

Violine I  
mit Dämpfer.

Violine II  
mit Dämpfer.

Viola  
mit Dämpfer.

Singstimme.

Violoncell  
mit Dämpfer.

Baß  
mit Dämpfer.

Mit ruhelos schmerzvollem Ausdruck.

This goes on for three stanzas, until a piercing sound interrupts the tumult. The glockenspiel signals the cessation of the storm, leading the transition to the fourth verse, which Mahler marked “Langsam, wie ein Wiegenlied” (Slowly, like a lullaby).

Ex. 13: "In diesem Wetter"

8 Allmählich langsamer.

The musical score is for a full orchestra and includes parts for the following instruments: K1. Fl., Fl., Ob., E. H., Cl., B.-Cl., Fg., C.-Fg., Hr., Hfe., Pk., Gl., Tamt., Vl., Vla., Sgst., Vcl., and C.-B. The score is divided into two systems, each starting with a measure number '8'. The tempo marking 'Allmählich langsamer.' is present at the top and bottom. The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (*ff*, *p*, *pp*, *f*, *dim.*), articulation (accents, slurs), and performance instructions (e.g., "Glückchen.", "geteilt").

8 Allmählich langsamer.

The last stanza speaks of the peace the children will find, not frightened by any storm, protected by God's hand. They will rest as if in their mother's womb.

### Mahler's Alterations of Rückert's Text

In Stanza 1, Mahler changed “Man hat sie hinaus getragen” (They have been carried out) in line 3 to “Man hat sie getragen, getragen, hinaus” (They have been carried, carried out). This change intensifies the fact first, that the children were taken, and then, that they were carried away. Rückert's use of the word “getragen,” derived from the infinitive, “tragen” (to carry), is interesting. Generally, the word “getragen” would be used to depict goods being carried or transported. It is as if Rückert wanted to relate that the children were practically abducted, not simply taken (“genommen”). A grieving parent would certainly have this feeling, though, that he was robbed of his children. Mahler's repetition of “getragen” serves to amplify this pitiful situation.

In the last line of Stanza 1, “dazu” (to that) and “nichts” (nothing) are reversed. This provides for “nichts” to fall on the downbeat, in an accented position. “Nichts” would be appropriately placed in a stronger position than “dazu,” emphasizing the plight of the parent's hopelessness: “I was allowed to say *nothing* about it.”

Stanza 3 of Rückert's text, translated, reads:

In this weather, in this horror,  
Had I let the children out,  
I would have worried, they might die tomorrow,  
That is now no cause for worry.



Mahler's version reads:

In this weather, in this horror,  
Never would I have let the children out.  
I would have worried, they might die tomorrow,  
That is now no cause for worry.

Mahler retained the word “nie” (never) from the previous stanzas for his Stanza 3, maintaining the emphatic “never.”

Mahler created a new Stanza 4 by repeating Rückert's Stanza 1, but substituting “Graus” (Horror) for “Braus” (Rushing) at the end of Line 1.

The phrase “Saus und Braus” is an idiom in the German language much like the idiom in English “Cats and Dogs,” both referring to heavy rainfall. Within the context of describing the weather, “Saus” and “Braus” are almost never used independently. Rückert's separation of the components of the idiom is unusual.<sup>38</sup>

Mahler's Stanza 5 is Rückert's Stanza 4, with alterations. At the end of the first line, “in diesem Braus” was inserted before “in diesem Braus.” In Line 2, “ruhn” (rest) becomes “ruh'n” and both “sie ruh'n” (they rest) and “der Mütter” (in the Mother's) are repeated. In Line 3, “Sturme” (storms) is changed to the singular “Sturm” (storm). Mahler added two lines of “Wie in der Mutter Haus” (As in their mother's house) to complete the stanza.

In the first and fourth stanzas of “In diesem Wetter”, the words “man hat sie getragen hinaus” (they have been carried out) says clearly that the children were carried outside and that Rückert was powerless against whoever took them. This uncertainty and

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<sup>38</sup> Christine Jahn Sundquist, interview by author, tape recording, Denton, TX , 7 July 2001.

feeling of helplessness is resolved when the words “Mutter Haus” (mother's house) signify the mother's womb, a revealing metaphor for birth through death. The children are resting as if in the mother's womb. Mahler's repetition of Rückert's text “sie ruhn” (they rest) mentioned above, affirms once again the fact that they are resting.

#### Text Alterations among Mahler's Versions

The alterations among Mahler's versions are almost exclusively punctuation changes; generally periods to exclamations points, commas to periods, etc., and are insignificant concerning word meaning. However, there are thirteen such changes, further reinforcing the contention that Mahler was deeply concerned with the text and the text setting. Had he not be so concerned, these small punctuation changes would have not occurred.

In the Ms I and II “Schoß” (womb) was used and not “Haus” in Stanza 5 by Mahler. In the StV I and II it was used but changed to “Haus”, interestingly enough, after the birth of his own children. Edward Kravitt states that

.... this introduction of “Schoß”, a generative symbol (unborn children awaiting birth) in a cycle about the death of children is of greatest significance. It shows that Mahler actually did link the death and birth of children, artistically and philosophically, as he had autobiographically, through the deaths and births of his siblings.... Finally, Mahler changed the word “Schoß” back to “Haus” when the

manuscript of the cycle went to the copyist in 1905. By that time, .... Mahler's two daughters had been born.<sup>39</sup>

The aforementioned recurring sound of the glockenspiel fittingly signifies a funeral bell as opposed to Donald Mitchell's idea of the child's toy bell, in “Nun will die Sonn“, the first song. This time, however, the tone is one of comfort as the children are at rest as the cycle concludes in D major.

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<sup>39</sup> Kravitt, 335-339.

## CONCLUSION

Gustav Mahler's was conscientious when setting Rückert's *Kindertotenlieder* and carefully chose his song texts based on their subject matter. He deliberately chose five poems linked by common references to symbolism of darkness and light from the 425 poems. The intensity of Mahler's search is signified even more by the remarkable fact that these poems were found scattered throughout Rückert's publication.

The various changes that Mahler made in the Rückert texts and his own several textual alterations among his own various versions of the *Kindertotenlieder* in various stages before publication demonstrates Mahler's attention to the details of text setting.

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